



California Earthquakes: Science, Risk, and the Politics of Hazard Mitigation (Creating the North American Landscape)

Carl-Henry Geschwind

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In 1906, after an earthquake wiped out much of San Francisco, leading California officials and scientists described the disaster as a one-time occurrence and assured the public that it had nothing to worry about. *California Earthquakes* explains how, over time, this attitude changed, and Californians came to accept earthquakes as a significant threat, as well as to understand how science and technology could reduce this threat.

Carl-Henry Geschwind tells the story of the small group of scientists and engineers who—in tension with real estate speculators and other pro-growth forces, private and public—developed the scientific and political infrastructure necessary to implement greater earthquake awareness. Through their political connections, these reformers succeeded in building a state apparatus in which regulators could work together with scientists and engineers to reduce earthquake hazards. Geschwind details the conflicts among scientists and engineers about how best to reduce these risks, and he outlines the dramatic twentieth-century advances in our understanding of earthquakes—their causes and how we can try to prepare for them.

Tracing the history of seismology and the rise of the regulatory state and of environmental awareness, *California Earthquakes* tells how earthquake-hazard management came about, why some groups assisted and others fought it, and how scientists and engineers helped shape it.

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